AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 25, wherein both parties never receive a copy in full of the opposite party's negotiating position.

10. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 25, wherein the broker allows a party to see a list of potential negotiation partners and the party selects negotiating partners.

11. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 10, wherein each party provides a specific negotiating position for each selected negotiation partner.

12-13. (Canceled)

14. (Withdrawn) A method for concealing the value of parameters with continuous ranges comprising concealing numerical values and value ranges in a partially encrypted negotiating position of a party by linear mapping of numerical values using a secret offset and secret scaling factor.

15. (Withdrawn) A method according to Claim 14, comprising:

using the encryption key, encrypting the name of a named value or named set of values as a number with $2n$ bits,

separating the $2n$ bits into two numbers of n bits, and

converting the two numbers of n bits to the offset and the scaling factor which are then applied to values in the value set by a linear mapping function.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 29, wherein the negotiating position of each party is described in standardized markup language.

19. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 29, wherein one-way encryption is applied to nouns and adjectives in a negotiating position.

20-21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim [[21]] 29, wherein the broker identifies the grammatical rule for a partially encrypted sentence by inspecting the unencrypted keywords.

23. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 29, wherein data to be exchanged through the negotiation comprises intelligence data, price information, or intellectual property holdings.

24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently Amended) A method of negotiation, comprising:
conducting a negotiation between two parties through a broker;
wherein each party receiving receives from the broker a dictionary of words for description of its negotiating positions, and a schema for descriptive statements in the negotiating position;
wherein the broker selecting selects one party to begin negotiation;
wherein the party who is selected to begin negotiation sending sends an encryption key to the other party;
wherein each party applying applies the encryption key to partially encrypt its negotiating position so that identical terms encrypt to identical values;

wherein each party sending ~~sends~~ its partially encrypted negotiating position to the broker[[:]]. wherein said broker does not possess the encryption key and is unable to decrypt any statement in the negotiating positions;

wherein upon receiving both partially encrypted negotiation positions, the broker comparing ~~compares~~ them to discover whether there exist encrypted statements that are common with both negotiating positions;

wherein said set of encrypted statements common to the two parties is an encrypted basis for agreement for said parties;

~~wherein said broker does not possess the encryption key and is unable to decrypt any statement in the basis for agreement;~~

wherein the broker notifying ~~notifies~~ each party about a basis-for-agreement;

wherein the broker providing ~~provides~~ the parties with a copy of an encrypted basis-for-agreement;

wherein each party decoding ~~decodes~~ the basis-for-agreement.

26. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 25, wherein the encryption key comprises a one-way encryption key

wherein the improvement comprises:

applying one-way encryption to partially encrypt statements contained in the negotiating position.

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 25, wherein the encryption key comprises a symmetric encryption key,

wherein the improvement comprises:

applying symmetric encryption to partially encrypt statements contained in the negotiating position.

28. (Withdrawn - Currently Amended) A method of negotiating between parties, ~~wherein the negotiation is between two parties through a broker,~~ each party sending a negotiating position to [[the]] a broker,

wherein public key encryption protects information exchanges so that only an intended recipient can decrypt the information and authenticate the sender,

wherein the improvement comprises:

each party partially encrypting its negotiating positions so that identical terms encrypt to identical values;

each party sending the partially encrypted negotiating position to the broker, wherein said broker is unable to decrypt the partially encrypted negotiating positions,

said broker comparing the partially encrypted negotiating positions to discover whether there exists an encrypted statement that is common with both negotiating positions,

said broker providing the parties with a copy of an encrypted basis-for-agreement; and

each party decoding the basis-for-agreement.

29. (Currently Amended) A method of negotiation between parties, comprising:

each party enrolling with a broker,

said broker providing each party with a vocabulary to describe the subject goods, services, information, or property to be exchanged through negotiation,

said broker pairing parties for negotiation wherein each party makes a selection of negotiation partners,

said broker selecting one party to begin negotiation;

each party preparing a negotiation position according to the vocabulary provided by the broker,

said parties agreeing on an encryption key and applying the encryption key to partially encrypt their negotiating positions by encrypting nouns and adjectives while conjunction, verbs and prepositions are not encrypted so that identical terms encrypt to identical values, wherein said broker does not possess the encryption key;

each party sending a partially encrypted negotiation position to the broker,

said broker comparing the partially encrypted negotiation positions <u>without decoding encrypted elements of the sentences</u> and notifying each party about a basis-for-agreement,

wherein if the parties agree to proceed with negotiation, said broker providing each party with a copy of an encrypted basis-for-agreement, each of said parties decoding the basis-for-agreement.

30. (Canceled)

31. (NEW) A method according to Claim 28, wherein each party partially encrypting its negotiating positions by encrypting nouns and adjectives while conjunction, verbs and prepositions are not encrypted.

32. (NEW) A method according to Claim 29, further comprising concealing numerical values and value ranges in a partially encrypted negotiating position of a party by linear mapping of numerical values using a secret offset and secret scaling factor.

33. (NEW) A method according to Claim 32, comprising:

using the encryption key, encrypting the name of a named value or named set of values as a number with 2n bits,

separating the 2n bits into two numbers of n bits, and

converting the two numbers of n bits to the offset and the scaling factor which are then applied to values in the value set by a linear mapping function.